

Workforce Supply

- **Unemployment is low, but the county has a large 85,900-strong available labor pool, that includes almost 71,000 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs.**

The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer. For the one-way commute, 43 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 45 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

Labor Force	329,752
Employed	314,687
Underemployment rate	22.5%
Number of underemployed workers	70,805
Unemployed	15,065
Available labor pool	85,870

Note: Based on August 2005 labor force data.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

- **In 2000, 89,400 commuted into the county for work, compared to 26,800 residents who worked outside the county.**

Each of the neighboring counties provided at least 1,600 in-commuters. About 50,000 in-commuters lived in two counties; Shelby and St. Clair. While providing workers for the county, the high level of commuting causes congestion on roads and highways.

- **The high level of commuting suggests that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers and not slow economic development.**

Impeded movement of workers can slow economic development. The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 63 percent of workers, but more than 40 minutes for 10 percent of workers. Nearly 4 percent of workers spend more than an hour to get to work. The commute is less than 10 miles for 54 percent of workers; about 17 percent of workers travel more than 25 miles one-way and 6 percent exceed 45 miles.

- **Jefferson County has higher educational attainment, but lower population growth than the state.**

Of the age 25 and over population, 75 percent are high school graduates and 19 percent hold bachelor's or higher degrees in Alabama. Jefferson County has 81 percent high school graduates and nearly 25 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. The county population fell by half a percent from 2000-2004, but grew nearly 2 percent for the state. The 2000-2010 projected population growth is 1.8 percent for the county and 8.8 percent for Alabama.

Workforce Demand

- **By sector, the top five employers in the county are health care and social assistance, retail trade, manufacturing, finance and insurance, and accommodation and food services.**

These five sectors provided 188,551 jobs, about half of the county total in the second quarter of 2004. Three of these leading employers—finance and insurance, manufacturing, and health care and social assistance—had average monthly wages that were above the \$3,107 countywide average.

- **On average about 18,100 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; average quarterly net job flows was 544.**

Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- **Three occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Home Health Aides; Security Guards; and Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses.**

The top five high-demand occupations are Retail Salespersons; Cashiers; Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand; Waiters and Waitresses; and Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers. The top five fast-growing occupations are Home Health Aides; Residential Advisors; Medical Assistants; Medical Records & Health Information Technicians; and Social and Human Service Assistants.

- **The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, science, and postsecondary education fields.**

Nine of the top 10 are health occupations (e.g. anesthesiologists and surgeons). Almost all high-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees.

- **Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning.**

Of 36 selected high-demand, 30 selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one occupation, General and Operations Managers, is both high-earning and in high-demand. Two occupations are both high-earning and fast-growing: Computer Software Engineers, Applications and Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software.

Workforce Investment Advisory Areas



- **Employment is currently growing faster than labor force and population.**

Implications for Workforce Development

- **The county's labor force must grow faster to meet workforce demand either by increasing the participation rate, growing population, or both.**

Workforce development initiatives that tackle this challenge might consider (i) focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) helping communities gain new residents, and (iii) facilitating in-commuting. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work. They are potential labor force participants and some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource. Increasing the number of residents is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting. However, communities must be prepared to invest in amenities and infrastructure to support population growth. Facilitating in-commuting should be a short-term strategy because it can worsen traffic.

- **Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries.**

High-demand and high-growth occupations are common to the two leading, but not high wage, employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the county economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries. Workforce development efforts should prepare workers for these industries.

- **Training in basic skills is very important, but high-earning jobs need resource management, complex problem solving, and systems skills as well.**

Basic skills are important for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs and emphasizes a strong need for training in such skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills while enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they

can help to identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- **A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset.**

Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising. There is therefore a very strong need to raise educational attainment in the county. Although this presents challenges to workforce development, it also presents opportunities for economic development through workforce development activities that involve postsecondary and higher education institutions. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the county. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills for a county that has low population and labor force growth rates is an effective economic development strategy. Thus, workforce development should continuously educate individuals, the public, and legislators about the private and social returns from education. This strategy will encourage individuals to seek to raise their own educational attainment level and also promote public support for education.

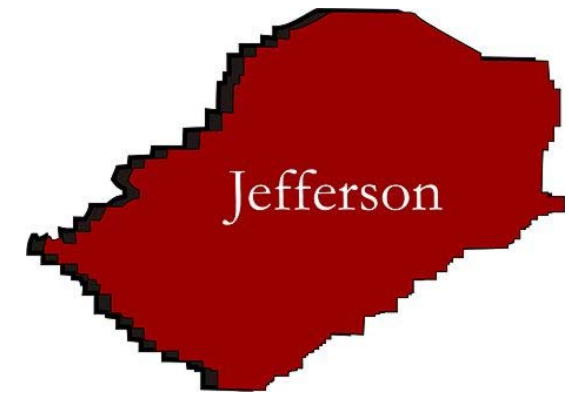
- **Ongoing worker retraining programs should be continued and enhanced.**

Alabama has a number of tools to assess, retrain, and place dislocated workers, especially those affected by outsourcing. These programs should be continued to ensure that the labor force participation rate does not fall.

- **Together, workforce development and economic development can build a strong and well-diversified county economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.**

Jefferson County LWIA

Workforce Report I Summary, 2005



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